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HISTORIAN

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OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

April 2012

COMING EVENTS AT LOBRANO HOUSE

The monthly luncheon meeting will be held on Thursday, April 19, 2012, at noon at the Kate Lobrano House. Guest speakers for the program will be Shawn Prychitko and Jim Canady, members of the Bay/Waveland Garden Club who will discuss the registration of oak trees in the area. **Reservations are required** and may be made by calling 467-4090. Please call **by noon on Wednesday, April 16**, to make your reservation, to help us plan seating which is limited to forty-eight people, and to apprise us of the number for whom to prepare. The price of the lunch is \$10.00.

Visiting Exhibit

A traveling historical exhibit, presented by the University of Southern Mississippi Gulf Coast is currently at the Kate Lobrano House and will remain through the month of April. It deals with the prehistoric and historic preparation, procurement, and consumption of food, with the preservation of cultural resources through good record keeping and digital imaging, and with identifying and reporting the archeological heritage of the Gulf Coast.



Raising Sheep in Hancock County

By
Eddie Coleman

Long before foreign settlers arrived in the area now known as Hancock County, Mississippi, Native Americans lived on and worked the land. Europeans brought domesticated crops and animals with them when they came, and among the animals were sheep.

In one of his letters, J. F. H. Claiborne praised Hancock County as "country...peculiarly

adapted to sheep." He noted that the soil is sandy and produces a countless variety of shrubs for grazing. In addition the land provided food all winter with its wild grasses, reeds, and rushes. Likewise it rendered natural shelter for the sheep during the winter months.

Claiborne also proposed that wool growing would be more profitable here than in the North. In more northern climates, he surmised, the breeder must own or rent every acre of land for his flock to graze upon. He also remarked that sheep require a wider range and are harder to pasture than any other stock. For these

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Marianne Pluim, Webmaster**LOBRANO HOUSE
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"TO PRESERVE THE GENERAL AND ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY OF HANCOCK COUNTY AND TO PRESERVE THE KATE LOBRANO HOUSE AND COLLECTIONS THEREIN; TO RESEARCH AND INTERPRET LIFE IN HANCOCK COUNTY; AND TO ENCOURAGE AN APPRECIATION OF AND INTEREST IN HISTORICAL PRESERVATION."

reasons, the farmer had to hedge, fence, or wall in the land and pay taxes on it. In addition, buildings for shelter had to be built, and food for long winters had to be provided. Moreover outbreaks of disease could destroy two-thirds of the flock. Nevertheless, the shepherd in the North grew and prospered.

Claiborne proposed that one could graze five thousand sheep or more along the Gulf Coast without owning a foot of land or paying any taxes. He said that one's flock could graze from the Pearl River to Mobile Bay and never stray from public land which furnished an inexhaustible pasture. His further arguments were that farmers needn't provide barns for shelter nor food for the sheep. A stronger argument which he made was that diseases common to sheep were unknown in the area. Claiborne held that the salinity of the grasses kept the sheep free of such disease. Such a conclusion, of course, is open to speculation. However he did say that locally raised mutton was very delicate and of superior quality.

An article in *The Sketch Book of Hancock County*, published in the early 1900's, supports many of the suppositions presented by Claiborne. It asserts that sheep raising had long been an important industry of the county and that the animals were practically self-supporting because they ranged during the entire year, received no feed from the farmers, and had no shelter or protection except what they could find for themselves.

In fact, their owners seldom saw them except when they were rounded up for shearing and marking. *The Sketch Book* also supports Claiborne's assertion that disease was almost absent among the flocks. Although many young lambs were killed by dogs and hogs, the natural increase of the flocks was about twenty-five per cent annually, which was more than enough to pay for the minimal cost of shearing; thus all income from the wool was net profit.

Wool and hides from the sheep were sold each year to vendors in Bay St. Louis and in Pass Christian and Woolmarket in Harrison County. Waveland's biggest industry in the 1880's was the Ulman Woolen Mills, built by Alfred A. Ulman. Located on the eastern side of Nicholson Avenue just north of the railroad tracks, the business produced wool blankets. However, one of its most popular items was a woolen shawl made in a large black and white block pattern. With these two products the mill became recognized for its superb workmanship and for merchandise of long-lasting, superior quality. A result of the mill's success was the opening of Jeff Davis Avenue to build homes for the mill workers, the area being known as Ulmanville.

Sheep raising flourished in Hancock County for many years, but it began its decline in the latter 1800's. Perhaps a few farmers raise sheep nowadays for their own use, but the mass production of sheep has ended. In fact, the Ulman Mills ceased production in the mid-1880's,

and the only remnants of its existence are two homes on Nicholson Avenue, made from one of the production buildings.

SOURCES:

Letter of J.F.H. Claiborne in the M. James Stevens file (III) at the Hancock County Historical Society. Letter originally pub. in the *Daily Delta*, 2 Sept. 1849.

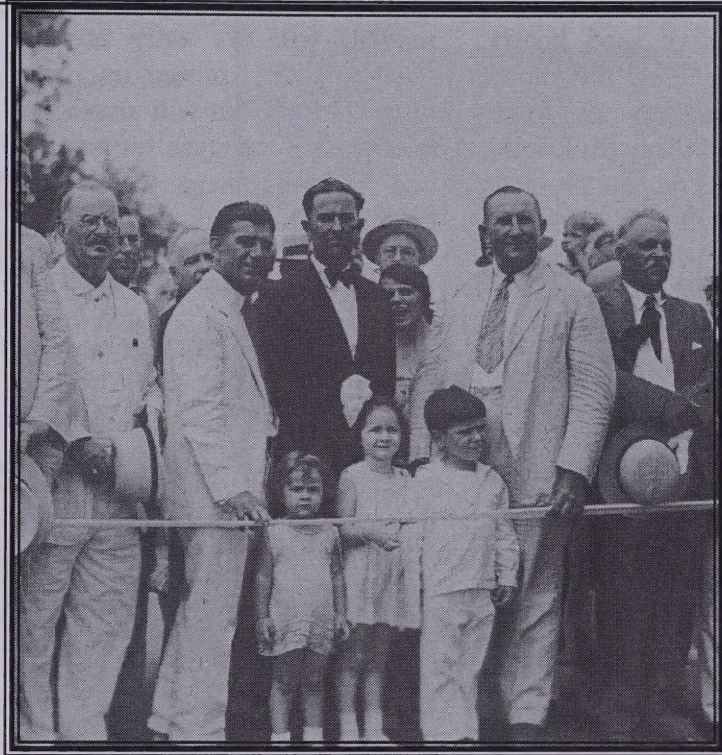
Scharff, Robert G. *Louisiana's Loss, Mississippi's Gain*. Lawrenceville, VA: Brunswick Publishing Corp., 1999.

Sketch Book of Hancock County, The. No publication information given. Reprint.

Did You Know This about Hancock County?

By
Scott Bagley

Did you know that the recently opened new seawall built to protect the beachfront in Hancock County is only the most recent in a number of projects over the years to protect the county's coast? As early as 1915, the City of Bay St. Louis together with St. Stanislaus College built a series of seawalls fifty-five hundred feet in length to protect the city's main business district. Between 1926 and 1929 a series of upright concrete walls as well as then novel step-type seawalls were constructed by Hancock County that stretched between the Jourdan River and Bayou Caddy (11.5 miles). This \$850,000 project was officially opened with a formal ceremony in front of the Hotel Reed in 1929. Also celebrated was the opening of the



Dedication of the newly constructed seawall and Beach Boulevard on August 3, 1929. The ceremonies took place in front of the Reed Hotel at 400 North Beach Boulevard in Bay St. Louis

Vivian Prague Ramsey cuts the ribbon at the dedication of the Seawall and Beach Boulevard on August 3, 1929. Others identified in the photo are the men in the white suits: L to R— H. S. Weston, president of the Hancock County Board of Supervisors; Bidwell Adam, Lieutenant Governor of Mississippi; and Charles Traub, Sr., Mayor of Bay St. Louis.

adjoining roadway (Beach Boulevard), a twenty-four foot double lane concrete road, costing approximately \$350,000. Overseeing the ceremony was president of the Hancock County Board of Supervisors, Horatio S. Weston; Bay St. Louis mayor, "Captain" Charles Straub; and Mississippi Lieutenant Governor Bidwell Adam.

The 1929 seawalls were reinforced concrete step-type slabs supported at the heel by reinforced concrete piling and at the toe by a curtain wall of interlocking concrete piles. Top elevations of both series of seawalls varied according to back-shore elevations and ranged from 2.78 feet above Mean Sea Level at Bayou Caddy to 11 feet at Bay St. Louis.

Also in 1929 the county attempted to maintain a beach seaward of the seawall through construction of a series of low, short concrete groins. In 1941 small amounts of dredged fill were placed against the wall in another effort to establish a protective beach. These efforts, however, were to prove mostly ineffective.

Since the 1940's and until Hurricane Katrina, maintenance of the seawall has been limited to essential repair work after complete washouts of sections of Beach Boulevard during periods of intense coastal flooding. Following extensive damage to the seawall and the adjoining roadway caused by Hurricane Betsy in 1965, wall sections were repaired and a 6.1 mile

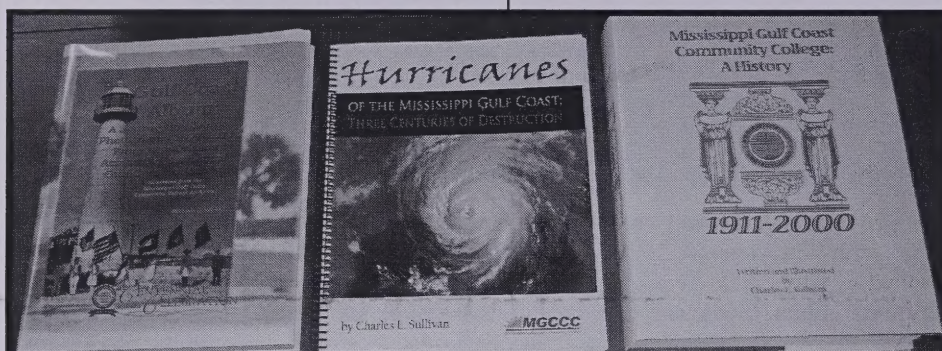
stretch of protective sand beach was constructed along the more severely damaged sections from Clermont Harbor to Bay St. Louis.

The most recent project, coming as a result of Hurricane Katrina, is a seventeen million dollar major seawall enhancement that has taken almost two years to complete. The new seawall stands twenty-four feet at its highest point and certainly changes the face of the Bay. Local leaders and residents hope that this new

seawall will not only provide much needed protection from future storms, but will also serve as a further catalyst for continued redevelopment of a once thriving business district.

Waveland Remembered

On April 26, 2012, a meeting will be held at the Waveland Public Library from 6:00 P. M.—until. Several long-time residents will be in attendance to share memories of Waveland. Please join us, and share your stories.



New Books at The Loblano House

Charles Sullivan, noted local author and chairman of the Social Studies Department at the Perkinston Campus of Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College, has written two new books and updated a third, all of which are available at the Hancock County Historical Society.

They two new ones are *Gulf Coast Album: A Journey in Historic Photographs 1899—2011 from New Orleans across the Mississippi Gulf Coast to Mobile* (\$40) and *Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College: A History* (\$35). The updated book is *Hurricanes of the Mississippi Gulf Coast: Three Centuries of Destruction* (\$30).

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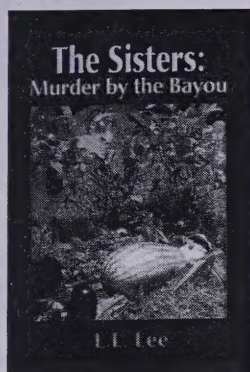
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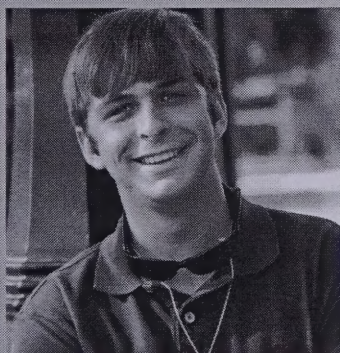
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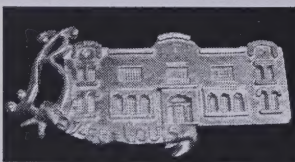
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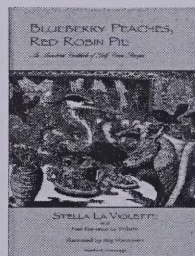


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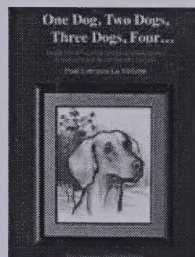
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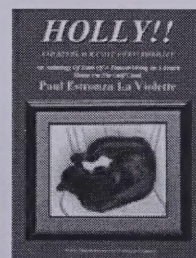
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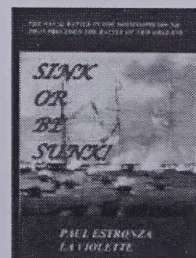
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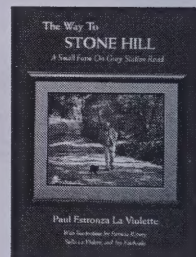
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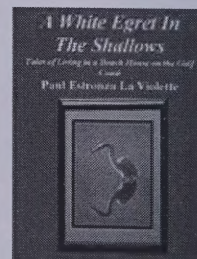
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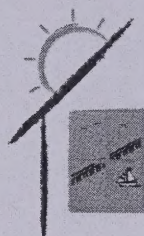
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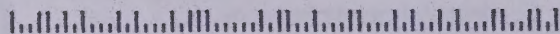
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